DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 362 066 FL 021 562

AUTHOR Cazden, Courtney B.
TITLE Metalinguistic Awareness Revisited: Its Contribution to the Child's Appropriation of Form.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 32p.; Plenary address to the Australian Reading Association Conference (Adelaide, South Australia, Australia, July, 1991). Previous versions of the analysis of "When I Was Naughty" were presented to the American Association of Applied Linguistics (New York City) and a seminar for the Boston University Applied Linguistics Program (March and April, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; Child Language; Curriculum; Elementary Secondary Education; *English; Foreign Countries; *Language Acquisition; Language Planning; Language Standardization; Legislation; Literacy; *Metalinguistics; Teaching Methods; Writing (Composition)
IDENTIFIERS *Great Britain

ABSTRACT

Metalinguistic awareness is discussed in terms of the new national curriculum in English language education in Great Britain. A chronology is presented of events surrounding national curriculum legislation that prompted controversy in Britain concerning the teaching of the English language. One result of this legislation has been the creation of the Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) project, which provides materials and activities for the teacher training necessary for curriculum implementation. A piece of writing by a young child called "When I Was Naughty" is examined as a case study of ways of talking about features of a written text, and selected observations by teachers and language researchers who were asked to respond to the child's writing are described. The importance of distinguishing between two levels of awareness and two kinds of pedagogy: between focusing students' attention on aspects of language on the one hand, and teaching explicitly about language forms and functions on the other, is discussed. Two studies of young children are described to illustrate this difference. (Contains 24 references.) (JP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 362 066

METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS REVISITED: ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHILD'S APPROPRIATION OF FORM

Courtney B. Cazden
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Cambridge, MA 02138

Plenary address to the Australian Reading Association conference in Adelaide, July 1991.

Previous versions of the analysis of "When I was Naughty" were presented to the American Association of Applied Linguistics, New York City, and a seminar for the Boston University Applied Linguistics Program in March and April 1991.

I am grateful to the following teachers and language researchers who remain anonymous in the report: Judy Pace, Gretchen Peters, Merryl Pisha, Linda Lipkin, Annie Silverman, Elsa Bartlett, Anne Dyson, James Gee, and Christine Pappas.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Courtney B Cazden
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL021562

Metalinguistic Awareness Revisited: Its Contribution to the Child's Appropriation of Form

Courtney B. Cazden
Harvard Graduate School of Education

It is intuitively obvious to us as language users that in speaking, our focal attention is on the meaning, or intention, of what we are trying to express. Complicated coordinations of phonetic, semantic, and syntactic processing are run off smoothly, out of awareness, while the language forms themselves remain transparent, to adult and child speakers alike.

The ability to shift attention and make language forms opaque rather than transparent, and attend to them in and for themselves, is called metalinguistic awareness. It is a special kind of language performance, one which makes special cognitive demands, and is less easily and less universally acquired than the language performances of speaking and listening. Our concern as educators with this particular kind of language performance comes from arguments and evidence that it is critically important for literacy.

One specific context of renewed interest in metalinguistic awareness--or "knowledge about language" as it is also called--is the new national curriculum in English language education in Britain. I'll give a brief history of that development; then use one piece of student writing to explore questions of knowledge about language for teachers; and end with a shorter discussion of some important issues in teaching knowledge about language to

students.

A Brief History of the English National Curriculum

During the past five years, a lively controversy has been taking place in British language education circles and in the British press about "the teaching of the English language" in the state school system. The controversy was prompted by the planning of a since-legislated national curriculum.

A chronology of some of the events in that planning is as follows. In 1986, after the national Department of Education and Science (DES) published a discussion document on English from 5 to 16, its recommendations about what it called "knowledge about language" (KAL) aroused more controversy than any other part of the report. KAL could be just a euphemism for that older and much loved or hated term 'grammar'; and old passions, both hopes and fears, were ignited among professionals and the general public.

In response to this controversy, the government created a special committee charged "to recommend a model of the English language as a basis for teacher training and professional discussion, and to consider how far and in what ways that model should be made explicit to pupils at various stages of education" (DES, 1988a, p. 1). The report of that committee, known by the name of its chair as "the Kingman Report," was issued in March, 1988. Rejecting any return to old-fashioned grammar teaching, it recommended teaching a model of language, with appropriate terminology, that includes the forms of language; notions of

context, audience and purpose in speaker/listener and writer/reader relationships; and language variation.

Subsequently, another group--the English Working Party--incorporated the Kingman recommendations into attainment targets for a national curriculum (DES, 1988b, known as "the Cox report" after its chair; DES, 1989 in final version), and appropriate legislation was passed by Parliament.

Now, a Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) project, funded by the British government for three years (April, 1989 through March, 1992), is providing materials and activities for the teacher training necessary for curriculum implementation. A book of readings, Knowledge about language and the curriculum (1990), edited by LINC director Ronald Carter, LINC's director, supplements materials being distributed by local LINC projects around Britain, and independently contributes to the general field of language in education.

My first-hand knowledge of the controversies during this period is limited to a few weeks in June, 1988, when I could talk directly with colleagues at a conference on the Kingman report called by the (British) National Association for the Teaching of English, and read the daily press and the weekly Times Educational Supplement. It was clear than that, as is always the case with language policies, the issues are both political and echnical.

Politically, there were at least four major issues: (1) the intentions and effects of a national curriculum per se (Lawton,

1989; Simon, 1988); (2) the status of non-English languages, called in Britain "community languages," in areas other than Wales, where teaching in Welsh is officially accepted (Stubbs, 1989); (3) the portrayal of Standard English as a matter of appropriateness to situation or of social class and attendant social power (Rampton et al, 1988); and (4) whether anxieties about grammar are at some deeper level anxieties about the breakdown of order and tradition, not just in language but in society at large (Cameron & Bourne, 1988, p. 150).

These are large and significant issues, all relevant to the US as to Britain, and perhaps also to Australia. But I will focus here on the more technical question of what knowledge abut language is useful for teachers and students.

According to Carter, the LINC project operates on the assumption that explicit knowledge about language is valuable for both:

> Explicit knowledge about language can sharpen teachers' appreciation of children's achievements with language as well as broaden the language opportunities they provide for pupils in the classroom. It can also help teachers understand the nature of children's difficulties or partial successes with language...[and] understand how to intervene constructively at various stages in their pupils' writing (Carter, 1990, p. 3).

I agree with this assumption, but without knowledge of how it is being worked out in materials and activities around Britain, I can only hope that there is accompanying research on the usefulness to teachers--in terms of ultimate benefits to students--of whatever knowledge about language is incorporated into this in-service teacher education work.

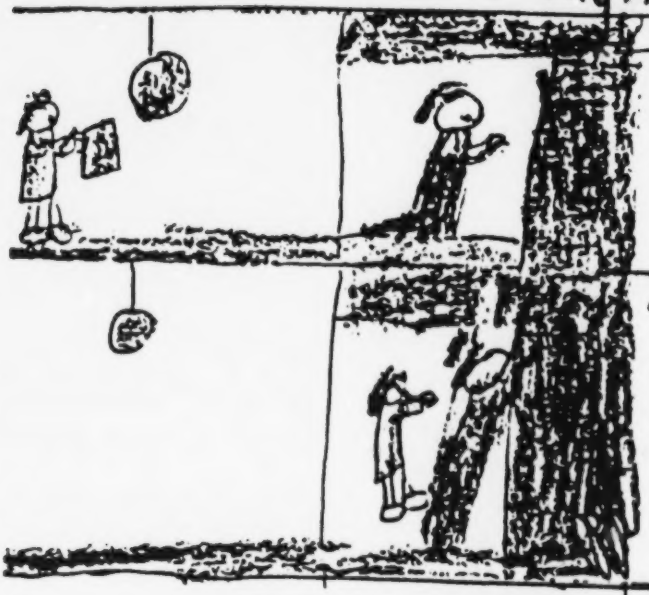
Applied linguist Henry Widdowson raised the all-important question about usefulness in his official "Note of reservation" to the Kingman report: "The rationale for the model ... does not come to grips with the central question of how knowledge about language can be shown to be relevant to the educational aims of English as a school subject" (DES, 1988a, p. 77). And Carter, in the LINC volume of readings, states firmly that "an analytical model is not a pedagogical model.... The payoff for any applied linguistic theory of language is not its power as a theory; what counts is its relevance to classroom practice" (1990. pp. 6, 14).

Here I will raise more detailed questions about knowledge of language, specifically for teachers of writing, by means of a close examination of one child's text.

"When I was Naughty"

As a case study of ways of talking about features of a written text, I asked a few teachers and language researchers to respond to one young child's writing. I selected "When I was naughty" (see next page) for this purpose because it was published as an example of young children's work in the report of the English Working Part on primary education (DES, 1988b), and has already received brief official comment in that document and more extended unofficial comment by an Oxfordshire primary school headmaster, Michael Armstrong (1990). It also seemed a good text for eliciting comments on the writer's strengths as well as weaknesses.

When I was naughty



It wasa ferw weex Past My birthday wen me and My Sister went to the Kitchen

I Went to the Cybad and Clare opnd the cubad and We tuck the crips and we went up serks My

dad cort me and Clare So he said have you tuck Sum thing From the cubad no we said

then My dad Said have you, no I lid are you teling lis no no no I lid again In the end My dad Mad me tell the trooth

then he Said you Naughty gils and Sent me and Clare to bed With owt eny Supa And Clare blamd it on me.

5A

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The five teacher respondents were all from the Boston area. One was interviewed by phone; four others were classroom teachers from elementary, junior and senior high schools brought together for what is called a "collaborative assessment conference" (Seidel, n.d.) under the auspices of research on portfolio assessment now underway at Harvard. Portfolio assessment is being advocated as a more authentic supplement, or even substitute, for more traditional tests. The term comes from the visual arts: painters keep and show portfolios of their paintings. It is being generalized to collections of representative samples of student work in any curriculum area, notably writing. Four language researchers were selected for their individual knowledge and interests, and were interviewed individually by phone.

Before turning to the text, three matters of method need to be explained. First, my comparison of comments on "When I was naughty" is not based on control of either the respondents' information or their conditions of work. The researchers and one teacher all received the text by mail and could spend as much time with it as they wished before the telephone interview. They also were told as much as I knew: that the writer was a 6-7 year-old girl in England. The group of teachers, in accordance with the portfolio project's usual ways of working, were given the text just a few minutes before discussion started, without information about the writer's gender, nationality, or age. Their discussion was led by a portfolio researcher; and I was present only as a silent observer until the end, when I gave the group

typed excerpts from the researchers' observations and asked which comments prompted them to notice new features of the text, and which seemed less useful or even wrong.

Second, working with a young child's text in this decontextualized way is very different from my own previous research on oral narratives of children of this same age (Cazden, 1988). There, Sarah Michaels and I looked at narrative structure in relationship to the structure of the classroom speech event, Sharing Time, in which the texts were produced. I know nothing of the classroom conditions in which "When I was naughty" was produced. Was the title assigned by the teacher? (One could hypothesis that it was from the correct spelling of naughty.) Was the horizontal strip format part of the assignment or this writer's personal choice? Which did she do first, pictures or words? We know only that it was an "unaided first draft."

My justification for asking respondents to consider the text all by itself is because my interest here is only in the features of the text they singled out, and the terminology they used in talking about them; there is no attempt to explain why the text came to be as it is. I wanted to foreground the text and make it opaque as an object of attention and reflection, separate from writer, teacher or classroom. Moreover, members of the portfolio assessment project generally work this way, because they find it easier to maintain teachers' focus on children's work if only the work is presented for discussion. (If the teacher in whose classroom the work was produced happens to be present--as was not

the case here--he or she is routinely asked to be a silent listener.)

Third, one can not assume that teachers will talk in an interview as they would in the classroom. The advantage of interviews here is only that everyone--British national curriculum designers and primary headmaster, US teachers and language researchers alike--can all respond to a single text. That's the one controlled variable in an otherwise uncontrolled exploration.

With these qualifications clearly in view, I will present selected observations about "When I was naughty," and then discuss the teachers' reactions to written excerpts from what the researchers had said. I will focus here on the verbal part of the story, and include comments on the pictures only as they are related to the words.

Surface conventions

Let's get surface conventions of spelling, capital letters and punctuation out of the way first. Here the striking contrast is between the official comment from the English Working Party, who chose the text in the first place, and everyone else. Admittedly, their comment is conditioned by their charge to establish "attainment targets"; and they concluded that that charge excluded the possibility of evaluating the desirable qualities of writing that is, in their words, "vigorous, committed, honest, and interesting," because such qualities

"cannot be mapped onto levels". About "When I was naughty" they write in toto:

> This is a simple chronological account with a clear story structure, including a conventional beginning, narrative middle and end. The sentences are almost all demarcated, though via the graphic, comic-strip layout, and not via capital letters and punctuation. The spelling is almost entirely meaningful and recognisable. In several cases, it shows that the author has correctly grasped the patterns involved, even though the individual spellings are wrong. The handwriting occasionally mixes upper and lower case letters, though only at beginnings and ends of words, not at random (DES, 1988b, p. 76).

It was Armstrong's dismay at such a reductionist assessment that prompted his alternative analysis:

> Is that all that's worth saying about this story? Is it, at any rate, all we need to record, all we need to know, as parents, teachers, storytellers ourselves? Can this really be how to talk about children and their work? (1990, p. 13)

None of the American respondents evaluated the story as the English Working Party had done. Two teachers found evidence in the spelling of supa and cubad that the writer must be from either Boston or England. Another found evidence of risk-taking in the writer's invented spellings. And one suggested that quotation marks would be a perfect next step for this child, because she handles direct speech so well.

It may seem surprising that the teachers did not dwell on these conventions. I don't know their professional backgrounds, but their responses may be an indication of the influence of writing pedagogy that advocates attention to aspects of content and overall structure first, leaving editing details to the last. No researcher commented on either spelling or punctuation,

seeming to assume, rightly, that my interests were elsewhere.

Overall text structure

The teachers appreciated the narrative structure in these terms:

> It flows.
>
> It has a beginning, middle, and end.
>
> Time is always in order. There's a really good sequence.
>
> Each section is a coherent piece that's part of the whole.

One researcher commented on the relationship of pictures to text:

> Unlike many young children's texts that go with pictures,here the text is not just explaining, or pointing to, the pictures. ("This is me and this is my sister.") She's using the spatial possibilities of the visual medium and the verbal possibilities of the language medium in complementary ways. The pictures show the quality of actions: the sister leaning into the cupboard and the little one with outstretched arm in the second picture; and the shift from grinning in the beginning to frowning in the fourth picture when the dad appears and the mood has changed. But the lying is not there in the pictures at all; there's no confrontation, because the girls never look at the dad. She is most skillful at portraying the confrontation through words.

Another researcher found that the story has what Hasan (1984) considers the three obligatory elements of a story, and that the author nicely signals each one: (1) initiating event ("It was a few weeks past my birthday...."); (2) attempt to resolve the conflict or problem ("So he said...."); (3) resolution ("In the end....").

Still another researcher divided the text in ways closer to Labov's (1972) narrative structure: setting ("a few weeks past my

birthday"); the catalyst for the problem (getting the crisps); the problem (in the third and fourth parallel segments of dialogue); the resolution (with Dad's making the girls tell the truth); and the coda (punishment and blame).

It seems to me that some more differentiated set of categories should be more useful to teachers than the all-purpose, and therefore nearly vacuous, triad of beginning/middle/end. But both divisions and their labels vary from one model of analysis to another, even in the seemingly easier and more studied narrative genre.

The beginning

Now to story segments in sequence, starting with the beginning. One teacher called the first clause, "It was a few weeks past my birthday" the 'lead,' a term from journalism that may have been popularized by writing educator Donald Graves. In this teacher's words, "The lead gives a connection to a personal event. It places the reader in time."

One researcher expanded on what she felt to be unusual aspects of this same first clause:

> "A few weeks past my birthday" seems a bit sophisticated. It's an estimate, and yet also a very precise indication that a time interval has been estimated. An adult would do that who wanted to come on to the reader as being very accurate, but with faulty memory.

Possible pedagogical implications of considering the narrative beginning as 'lead' or 'setting'/'orientation' become clearer in comments about the use of a definite article for the

first mention of "the crisps" ('potato chips' in the US) in the second segment. Perera, writing in the LINC volume, considers such use of specific indefinite reference, "when the speaker has a specific person or object in mind which has not yet been introduced to the listener," a feature of oral, rather than written language (1990, p. 217). One researcher commented on it, presumably because of her own developmental research on elementary school writers' use of such referential terms. She called it "a childishism" that would be outgrown, but she also acknowledged it as a narrative device that experienced writers use:

> The faulty reference to "the crisps" presupposes that they've been mentioned before. "The kitchen" is OK, because in a house you can assume there is a kitchen, but not that in a cupboard there are crisps. Some writers do start stories that way; it's a narrative device for bringing the reader right into the action and make the reader presuppose a lot of things that you haven't legitimately set up. But I don't think that's the case here. I don't know how you'd teach kids to write "some crisps", but at a certain age they pick it up.

The group of teachers argued among themselves over this comment:

> I think I would have written the same thing. There's a personal nature about this, and writing it brought the memory back to the child. "This is my story; I was naughty; why should I talk about some crisps?"
>
> Well, but wouldn't you say, "I went to the kitchen to get some crisps" as opposed to "I went to get the crisps"?
>
> [But] she didn't just come to get some crisps. Like she knew there were those crisps in the cabinet.

And another group of applied linguistics students suggested

either that the crisps were in fact related to the writer's already mentioned birthday; or simply that, as American children might assume the presence of peanut butter in every well-stocked kitchen cupboard, so British children may asume the presence of crisps.

To combine terminology, an explicitly informative setting/orientation is one kind of narrative lead, but only one. An important issue in the dissemination of linguists' descriptive categories to teachers is the danger that they will acquire, in that new use, powerful normative force. We must be careful not to conclude from the fact that oral narratives often begin with some kind of temporal and/or spatial setting that all written narratives should begin there; or, more specifically, that because writing an initial definite article presupposes information not yet provided, doing so is normatively wrong even if experienced fiction writers do it often.

Transition between initiation and conflict

In the transition to the conflict between the two sisters and their father, there is the anomalous placement of my at the end of the second segment instead of at the beginning of the third. This is the only place where a segment does not end with the end of a sentence. Here is Armstrong's interpretation:

> The second frame of text is all uninhibited action. The tiny canonical sentences hurry by, each with its active verb in a simple past tense: went, opened, took, went. Each linked to the next by the indispensable "and". Then a sudden eruption: dad, lies, punishment, recrimination, the world of moral order. The author is

> remarkably particular about this shift. At the end of frame two the action is brought sharply to a stop, but not with the end of the sentence, as in every other frame. The "my" seems to highlight the interruption of the action (1990, p. 13).

One researcher had a different analysis of my, explaining its placement not as an unconscious representation of interrupted action, but as a written analogue of a speech error, the result of dual attention in the writer's mind as she writes down one idea while planning the next.

> The boundary [between these ideas] for some reason got invaded. She realizes her punch line is going to be Dad catches them. It's already in her mind in the planning, and she couldn't catch herself. You the reader don't know it, but she knows that it's coming. So, unconsciously--like a speech error--she lets it invade.

One of the teacher's appreciated Armstrong's interpretation:

> On the first page, "the canonical sentences hurrying by"--noticing that the my in the second frame starts another sentence, and that sort of stops the action--I hadn't thought about that. And again, I don't think that the writer did. I sort of like the effect, and that comment made me notice it, which I hadn't done.

No teacher picked up the speech error interpretation, but another researcher, on hearing about it, found it a potentially productive hypothesis to keep in mind in responding to other 'errors.' Enhanced awareness of the cognitive load entailed in composition might have that heuristic value for teachers too. But more explanation would be needed about speech errors and possibly related phenomena in writing.

In the next sentence, the verbal confrontation begins: "So he said, 'Have you took something?'" Opinion divided on the writer's choice of the conjunction so. One researcher considered

the meaning here simply "And then..." rather than causality, which she thought so signified. But Armstrong, having checked the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), which gives both sequence and consequence, suggests that the double meaning implies "that the dad has already guessed the truth." While the OED reassures us that the writer's use is appropriate, on what evidence should we assume that this young writer intends, on any level of awareness, both meanings?

Confrontation in dialogue

Now to the best part, the confrontation in dialogue in segments three and four. There is no doubt that a large part of the appeal of this little story is in that dialogue. Narration is always more vivid when speech is presented in direct quotation. In Deborah Tannen's words, "Constructed dialogue in conversation and in fiction is a means by which experience surpasses story to become drama" (1987, p. 69). Everyone, with the notable exception of the English Working Party, commented on the dialogue in "When I was naughty" with appreciation and even praise--both for the dramatic effect, and for the varied words and structures with which it is presented.

One teacher said, "The feeling of suspense is sustained through the first half of the story. When the Dad is questioning them, you don't know how it is going to turn out." Another pointed out, "It is interesting writing because of the variety of words, such as lied instead of always said."

Two researchers expanded on both the drama and the language variation, finding the latter not only in words but in structures.

> The writer has a real sense of dramatization. There's a very well marked, and interestingly marked, conflict that escalates from a mild confrontation introduced by "he said" to a bout of lying. The language actually changes from a neutral description to words that embody the morally extreme affect of the conflict. That's called attention to, but not all at once. It doesn't start out with "we lied" but "we said." Such explicit acceleration of the conflict is almost like music: forte, forte, FORTE.
>
> She has a great deal of control over the manipulation of speech for writing. To move through three levels of questioning, up to the meta level (Have you took something? Have you? Are you telling lies?) is really sophisticated. And the way she uses variation in the 'tags': said/lied; before the speech (So he said, "...."; after the speech ("No," we said.); omitted ("Are you telling lies?"; with adverb (No, no, no,"I lied again.). She either has to say it out loud to get it that natural, and then write what she's saying; or she has to realize from her book experience how to artfully lay it out.

One researcher also suggested a possible indirect speech act in the question, "Have you took something?"

> If the dad suspects, when he asks the first question, that they did take something, then the writer has a good ear for indirect speech acts: he's asking a question, but really making an accusation.

As a group, the teachers appreciated the idea of the writer as dramatist:

> I liked [the comment that] "the writer has a real sense of dramatization."
>
> Yeah.
>
> I hadn't really thought of that either.

But the researchers's comments about the writer's "control"

of dialogue and her "ear for indirect speech acts" elicited considerable skepticism from the teachers:

> I had questions about what's written about her "control over the manipulation of speech." The part "she either has to say it out loud...or realize from her book experience...." It makes it sound as if she is being very conscious about her writing. And I'm not sure that she is conscious. I think she has linguistic ability, and that she may not realize what's she's doing, but she's doing it. She doesn't have to realize what she's doing in order to be successful.
>
> My understanding of that is just that she was a reader, and so she understood implicitly the structure of books and stories.
>
> And the comment about how "the writer has a good ear for indirect speech acts." Well, I think it's common for kids to use said rather than asked. So I'm not sure that's what's going on there. It seems typical for parents to talk with kids that way. So I guess I would explain it as her just remembering how parents talk.

The teachers may underestimate the learning involved in appropriating models available in either books or parent speech for expressing the child's own meanings. And they may misinterpret the kind of tacit knowledge that the researchers are imputing to the young writer. On the other hand, how would we decide just what child knowledge about language, on any level of awareness, this text represents?

Is any important information missing?

Finally, back to a quality of the whole story: Does the writer provide all the information a reader needs or not? Here the teachers disagreed among themselves. Some wanted more information, and spoke as if in a conference with the writer:

> Was going for the crisps related in some way to the fact that you'd just had your birthday?
>
> How did your father make you tell the truth?
>
> Why did Claire blame it on you?

Another disagreed: "It's very concise; she's only telling about what's important."

Unlike the teachers' disagreement over the definite reference to "the crisps," which seems related to their imagining themselves as writers, this disagreement over whether more information should be added seems to come from their individual teaching experiences. The teacher who expressed praise for conciseness taught elementary grade children who, in their writing, "give you every single detail [and] it gets boring." But a junior high teacher responded from her very different experience with 9th grade writers:

> It's pretty spare. That has a nice appeal if I think of a young kid creating it. But if I think of a 9th grader in whom I'm trying to develop some fluency in their writing, the spareness would tell me they're having some trouble expressing themself.

In addition to a teaching objective of developing what this teacher calls 'fluency,' other influences may press teachers to ask student writers, too routinely, for more information: (1) genuine interest in details of students' experiences and ideas; (2) learning too well the descriptive research about how good 'reader-based prose' includes all the details that the writer can't assume the reader already knows; and (3) fear that students will be marked down by other teachers, or on writing competency tests, for giving too few details.

Two researchers asked, on principled grounds, for more information at specific points. One did the kind of analysis of cohesive density and text coherence recommended by Hasan (1984). On that basis, she would ask specifically about two 'peripheral tokens'--birthday and blaming--both referential terms that were not related to other referents or semantic relationships in the text. (Not related, that is, unless the birthday accounts for the presence of the crisps.) Another pointed out that the last sentence contains an ambiguous extended reference to it: What exactly did Claire blame on the writer?

Only Armstrong's analysis invokes aesthetic criteria in appreciating the writer's selection of details, and so foregrounds the matter of choice--not more details but which details--that all good writing requires:

> "When I was naughty" allows us to glimpse a young child's thought in all its imaginative richness. The artistry of its six year old author is apparent in every aspect of her story. In her exploitation of narrative style, with its formulas, its suspence, its various concealments and revelations, its openness to interpretation....In her critical judgment, so apparent in her choice of vocabulary. In her concern to express her own sense of life in the ordered medium of written and drawn narrative. In short in her appropriation of form (1990, p. 15).

What Knowledge about Language for Students?

As we fulfill our responsibility as teachers to help all children accomplish what Armstrong so aptly calls "the appropriation of form", part of our job is to stimulate a transformation of some of children's tacit knowledge into more

conscious awareness. Think of each addition to children's tacit knowledge as written in their minds in magic ink, or recorded in magic sound. As these additions grow in number and complexity of relationships, so they also can--especially with help--become more visible, or audible, to the children themselves.

That process, by itself, can only suffice where children's tacit knowledge--based on immersion in the language of their out-of-school life--fits the requirements of school. All children come to school knowing an oral language; but many children have not had the extensive experience with written texts that we assume the writer of "When I was Naughty" had had. I assume that these children need carefully orchestrated combination of wholistic language immersion experiences and more direct and explicit instruction (Cazden, 1991). The nature of the best combination for students of particular ages and literacy experiences is a major controversy in the US, and--though discussed in different terms--also, I gather, in Australia.

As we work on this question in our respective countries, I only want to suggest the importance of distinguishing between two levels of awareness and kinds of pedagogy: in essence, between focusing students' attention on aspects of language on the one hand, and teaching explicitly about language forms and functions on the other. I agree with what I understand to be the theme of this conference that making literacy explicit is part of making it possible. But, I would add, only part.

Consider two statements in Margaret Donaldson's book,

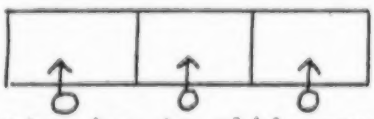
Children's Minds (1978). This book is given special prominence in the British Kingman report as the only child development reference. Despite Donaldson's excellent general discussion of contextualized vs. textualized knowledge, the distinction between revealing and telling is not made. Here are two quotes, both referring to the complexities of English spelling:

> The nature of the correspondence system [between sounds and letters] should be revealed as soon as possible (p. 73).
>
> If the system they are dealing with does involve options [i.e. many:many correspsondence rather than 1:1], we should tell them so (p. 105; emphasis added in both quotes).

These two sentences might have seemed synonomous for Donaldson's purposes. But in the context of recommendations about knowledge about language for students of different ages, they are not. 'Telling' is not the only way of ensuring that important information is 'revealed.' Donaldson's choice of words differentiates, perhaps more than she consciously intended, between alternative ways of communicating about language to children: focusing their attention so that features of language will be revealed and tacit knowledge about them implicitly acquired, versus explicit teaching. To exemplify this distinction, I'll describe two studies of young children learning to writethose surface features of text that the English Working Party was looking for.

My first example comes from the very successful New Zealand Reading Recovery program for 6-year-old children who have not caught on to reading. For those not familiar with the details of this program, it is enough to explain here that one component of the program is helping children attend to the sounds in their own speech. During each individual tutorial session, the child composes a message--at first just one sentence--on a topic of the child's choice, and writes it with the tutor's help that Clay and Cazden have analysed as kinds of scaffolds (1990).

One kind of help involves a technique adapted from Soviet psychologist, Elkonin (1973). The tutor draws a set of boxes that match the number of sounds (not letters) in the word. So, for example, there would be a set of three boxes, not four, for the word made:



The tutor demonstrates how to slide counters up into the boxes, left to right, as she says the word with exaggerated slowness; the child copies her actions, names any letters heard in the process, and finds the boxes they belong in. (Parenthetically, Clay has found that in the year-long training of Reading Recovery teachers, one essential concept they find difficult is the distinction between speech sounds (phonemes) and letters, presumably because adults' mental representation of English word sounds has been so deeply influenced by experience with written text.)

Thus, a teaching technique has been developed that successfully teaches phonemic awareness by focusing the beginning writer's attention where it is needed to express the child's intended meaning, thereby revealing (in Donaldson's words) the sound structure to the child without explicitly teaching linguistic labels or orthographic rules.

There are two advantages to revealing the system in this way, rather than by teaching rules of letter/sound correspondence (as is more often done in the US). First, in Reading Recovery the direction of the child's attention is from sounds to letters, not the reverse, because it is oral language that children bring as a resource to literacy learning in school.

Second, the orthographic system is revealed in its complexity rather than distorted in oversimplification. Longitudinal research shows, for example, that the most common words that 6-year-old children learn to write without help during the Reading Recovery program reveal to the child that many letters represent different sounds, not just one: for example, that the letter a represents sounds in the words a, at, play, father, and said.

My second example comes from a longitudinal study of the progress of an entire classroom of American 6-year old children learning conventions of punctuation, especially the placement of periods (Cazden, Cordeiro and Giacobbe, 1985). The children were in one of the classrooms in which Donald Graves did his initial research on writing. The teacher, Mary Ellen Giacobbe, came to

Harvard as a graduate student the following year, bringing with her a complete set of her children's writings.

In Giacobbe's classroom, the children wrote every day and the teacher conferenced with children about their writing. When a piece of writing was ready to be edited for 'publication,' the teacher would typically read aloud the child's story without pauses; when the author objected, she would say, "You read it the way you want it to sound. When you come to a stop, that's probably where we need to put a period." Over the course of the year, the children showed some development in their ability to put periods where neeeded, even in long stories that required their attention to many other aspects of the complex task of writing. But errors of both omission and commission remained.

The most interesting part of the research turned out to be the nature of the children's errors of commission. Six patterns emerged in our analysis, each representing an hypothesis about the answer to the problem of when words should be separated not just by a space but also by a period: between syllables, between words, end of the line, end of the page, after phrases and clauses, and correct.

Cognitively, the most interesting period placement, even though no more correct by our adult standards than the others, was what we termed 'phrase structure': the placement of periods between groups of words we know as phrases and clauses--structured units intermediate between words on the one hand and full sentences on the other. Here are some examples (with the

children's spelling corrected for ease of reading):

ON THE WAY HOME. MY CAR IT EXPLODED

KERRY CAME OVER. TO PLAY WITH ME.

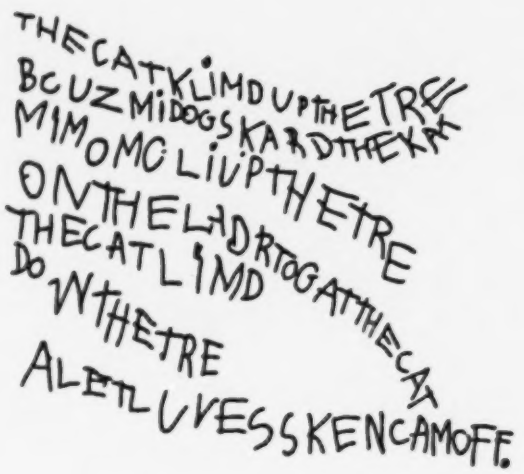
WE ARE PACKING. TO GO TO LOON MOUNTAIN

MY DAD MY MOM AND MY BROTHER MY GRAMMY AND MY GRAMPY.
WENT TO NEW YORK WITH ME.

PETER PAN LIVES WITH THE LOST BOYS. AND WENDY.

And here is one delightful story in which the writer's tacit phrase structure knowledge is signalled not by periods but by the placements of words in lines:

THE CAT CLIMBED UP THE TREE
BECAUSE MY DOG SCARED THE CAT
MY MOM CLIMBED UP THE TREE
ON THE LADDER TO GET THE CAT
THE CAT CLIMBED
DOWN THE TREE
A LITTLE OF HIS SKIN CAME OFF.



We considered such 'phrase structure' placement as evidence of these young writers' implicit awareness of constituent structures above the level of the word: 'awareness' because we inferred more deliberation than is evidenced by spontaneous speech production; 'implicit' because it had not been explicitly taught by the teacher and undoubtedly could not be verbalized by the children.

Implications for teaching are less clear from this research than from Reading Recovery. We have revealed an important resource in children's intuitive language system. But such descriptive research (like earlier research on children's invented spelling) is not a sufficient base for teaching. We did not take the next step, as Reading Recovery has done, of figuring out how to build on that resource most effectively.

Student writers frequently have problems with what usually get categorized uninformatively as 'sentence fragments'. At what age can children be helped by explicit discussion of phrases and clauses, both independent and dependent--the only categories that yield a valid guide to the adult system? And at what age can we encourage young writers to use fragments rhetorically, for emphasis, as professional writers often do? For example, one first grader wrote a 200-word story about his family's "Cousin convention" in which it was clear that he hated sausage. When he then wrote:

We are having pancakes for breakfast. Without sausage.

we considered both of these periods as correct, even felicitous, use.

There are two more general limitations of depending on children's metalinguistic awareness as a resource for the teaching of writing. First, what about children whose first language is not the language of the school? With respect to learning sound/letter correspondences, Reading Recovery research, at least in New Zealand, claims that it works equally well

regardless of children's language background. But I know of no detailed case studies of the writing development within that program of children acquiring English as a second language. (Clay & Cazden, 1990, give a case study of a Polynesian child, Premala, but she seems to be a native English speaker.) With respect to punctuation, Edelsky (1983) reports phrase structure placement of periods in the writing, in Spanish, of native Spanish speakers. But again, case studies of children learning to write in their second language would be valuable.

The second limitation concerns children's appropriation of language forms beyond the sentence. We can infer that the author of "When I was naughty" has rich tacit knowledge of one genre: narratives, written as well as oral. But we know that many children in our schools have not had the out-of-school experiences with books that builds such knowledge in a variety of genres. As I have suggested, I assume they need rich experiences with texts from which metalinguistic awareness can develop from the inside out, plus more explicit supplementary instruction that works from the outside in--in short, what Vygotsky (1962) calls spontaneous and scientific knowledge. I know that many Australian teachers and researchers are actively working on this problem, and I am grateful to the Australian Reading Association for giving me the chance to come and learn from this work.

References

Armstrong, M. (1990). Another way of looking. Forum, 33 (1), 12-16.

Cameron, D. & Bourne, J. (1988). No common ground: Kingman, grammar and the nation. Language and education, 2, 147-160.

Carter, R. (Ed.) (1990). Knowledge about language and the curriculum: The LINC reader. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Cazden, C.B. (1988). Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cazden, C.B. (1991). Active learners and active teachers. In J.F.Flood, J.Jensen, D.Lapp, & J.R.Squire (Eds.). Handbook of research in teaching the English language arts. NY: Macmillan.

Cazden, C.B., Cordeiro, P., & Giacobbe, M.E. (1985). Spontaneous and scientific concepts: Young children's learning of punctuation. In G. Wells & J. Nichols (Eds.). Language and learning: An international perspective. London & Philadelphia: Falmer.

Clay, M. and Cazden, C.B. (1990). A Vygotskian perspective on Reading Recovery. In L. Moll (Ed). Vygotsky and education. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

DES. (1986). English from 5 to 16. London: HMSO.

DES. (1988a). Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the teaching of English language (the Kingman report). London: HMSO. (March)

DES. (1988b). English for ages 5 to 11 (the Cox report). London: HMSO. (November)

DES. (1989). English for ages 5 to 16. London: HMSO.

Donaldson, M. (1984). Children's minds. London: Fontana.

Edelsky, C. (1983). Segmentation and punctuation: Developmental data from children in a bilingual program. Research in the Teaching of English, 17, 135-156.

Elkonin, D.B. (1973). USSR. In J. Downing (Ed.). Comparative education: Cross-national studies of behavior and processes in reading and writing. NY: Macmillan.

Hasan, R. (1984). The nursery tale as a genre. Nottingham Linguistic Circular, 13, 71-102.

Labov, W. (1972). Language in the inner city: Studies in the black English vernacular. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Lawton, D. (1988). Ideologies of education. In D. Lawton & C. Chitty (Eds.) The national curriculum. London: UNiversity of London Institute of Education, Bedford Way Papers / 33.

Perera, K. (1990). Grammatical differentiation between speech and writing in children aged 8 to 12. In Carter (1990), 216-233.

Rampton, B., Bourne, J., & Cameron, D. (1988). The kingman inquiry: A briefing document. London: University of London Institute of Education, unpub. ms.

Seidel, S. (n.d.) Collaborative assessment conference. Cambridge: Harvard Graduate School of Education, Project Zero, unpub. ms.

Simon, B. (1988). Breaking the rules: the Baker 'reform' of education. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Stubbs, M. (1989) The state of English in the Englishg state. Language and Education, 3, 235-250.

Tannen, D. (1987). The orality of literature and the literacy of conversation. In J.A.Langer (Ed.). Language, literacy, and culture: Issues of society and schooling. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex.

Vygotsky, L. (1962). Thought and language. Cambridge: MIT Press.